



## Golden State Advantage Bulletin

# ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) PROJECT



## March 2004

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### U.S. POSTAL SERVICE ACCEPTS THE GOLDEN STATE ADVANTAGE CARDS IN CALIFORNIA

After years of discussions and planning, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) announced March 1, 2004 that EBT cards are accepted at all Post Office locations in California. This is a major addition to EBT cash access choices, providing a new resource in every community in California. Cardholders with cash benefits can now use their EBT card at the Post Office to pay for goods and services, purchase money orders, and get up to \$50 in cash.

Recognizing there is a Post Office in every town, and Post Offices provide low-cost, high-quality money orders, California asked the USPS to begin accepting EBT cards in 2002. The National Automated Clearinghouse Association EBT Council, many states, and other stakeholders also made the same request. The USPS agreed to add EBT in 2002; however, various technical difficulties delayed the implementation for more than a year. The USPS continues to work to add EBT functionality throughout the rest of the country.

### SCHEDULE OF THE REMAINING COUNTIES TO IMPLEMENT EBT

May 1, 2004	Mariposa County
June 1, 2004	Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and Sierra counties
July 1, 2004	Amador, Calaveras, Lake, Mendocino and Placer, and Tuolumne counties
Spring 2005	San Bernardino and San Diego counties

### EBT STATISTICS—FEBRUARY 2004

These statistics are based on 43 counties live on the EBT system for February 2004:

- ◆ 570,972 food stamp benefits were deposited via EBT totaling approximately \$113.2 million.
- ◆ There were 3,897,823 approved food stamp transactions in which clients redeemed approximately \$106.2 million in benefits.
- ◆ Food stamps were redeemed at 17,558 retail locations.
- ◆ 353,229 cash benefits were deposited via EBT totaling approximately \$150.2 million.
- ◆ There were 1,250,454 approved cash transactions in which clients redeemed approximately \$148.4 million in benefits.
- ◆ Clients accessed cash benefits at 12,408 POS locations and 21,334 different ATM locations.
- ◆ Average fees and surcharges paid per cash household were \$1.90 per month.
- ◆ 42.39 percent of all ATM transactions were at surcharge-free locations.
- ◆ 44.41 percent of cash benefits were withdrawn at surcharge-free ATMs.
- ◆ 38.31 percent of cash benefits were withdrawn at POS locations.
- ◆ Clients made 1,756,625 calls to the Customer Service ARU. 52,835 client calls were handled by Customer Service Representatives.
- ◆ 46,001 clients changed their PIN through the ARU.

### EBT BULLETIN

The EBT Bulletin will be published on a quarterly basis until San Bernardino County and San Diego County migrations are completed. The next EBT Bulletin is scheduled for publication July 2004.

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## **CLAIMS AND ADJUSTMENTS TRAINING**

One of the least understood aspects of California EBT is the claim and adjustment process. In the course of assisting clients with EBT disputes, many counties have found the claim process confusing. To address this need, the EBT Project will be conducting training in six locations across the state during the month of April 2004. The training will focus on county roles and responsibilities, including preparing for adjustment fair hearings.



In conjunction with this training the EBT Project will release the *County Guide to EBT Dispute Resolution*. This guide was developed to document the overall claims process as well as county-specific roles and responsibilities. On March 17, 2004 the EBT Project Office e-mailed a letter, a training agenda, and a meeting schedule to all County Welfare Directors and the County EBT Project Managers. We have included a copy of the training schedule below for your convenience. The EBT Project encourages all counties to take this opportunity to learn more about claims and adjustments. Contact John Waller at the EBT Project office via e-mail at [john.waller@sid.hhsdc.ca.gov](mailto:john.waller@sid.hhsdc.ca.gov) by March 29 to confirm attendance.

### **EBT CLAIMS AND ADJUSTMENTS TRAINING**

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	ADDRESS
April 13, 2004	10:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.	Sacramento	EBT Project Office 2525 Natomas Park Drive, Suite 100 Sacramento, CA 95833
April 15, 2004	1:00 p.m.— 4:00 p.m.	Redding	Shasta County Social Services Cascade Building 2460 Breslauer Way Redding, CA 96049-6005
April 19, 2004	9:00 a.m.— 12:00 p.m.	El Monte	Basement Conference Room El Monte District Office 3350 Aerojet Avenue El Monte, CA 91731
April 19, 2004	1:00 p.m.— 4:00 p.m.	El Monte	Basement Conference Room El Monte District Office 3350 Aerojet Avenue El Monte, CA 91731
April 20, 2004	1:00 p.m.— 4:00 p.m.	Santa Ana	Orange County Training & Career Development 1928 S. Grand Avenue Santa Ana, CA 92705
April 22, 2004	9:00 a.m.— 12:00 p.m.	Martinez	Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services 40 Douglas Drive, Room 101/102 Martinez, CA 94553-4068
April 27, 2004	10:00 a.m.— 2:00 p.m.	Hanford	Kings County Governor's Center Building #8 (Welfare) 1200 South Dr. Hanford, CA 93230

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## **U.S. BANK PROVIDES SURCHARGE-FREE ATM ACCESS TO EBT CARDHOLDERS IN CALIFORNIA**

U.S. Bank is helping California residents stretch their welfare benefits by waiving the non-account holder access fee at all U.S. Bank ATMs in the state. U.S. Bank has a growing presence in California with 233 branch offices and 215 ATMs throughout the state.

"Waiving the ATM surcharge helps Californians keep more of their payments at a time when every dollar counts," said a U.S. Bank representative. "We're grateful to have worked with such outstanding partners to bring this positive change to fruition."



U.S. Bank has been working on this project with the California Reinvestment Committee (CRC), a San Francisco-based economic development organization. CRC Executive Director Alan Fisher said, "We are pleased to see U.S. Bank take this important step in reaching out to low-income California residents."

## **LOS ANGELES COUNTY EBT CONVERSION**

Los Angeles County successfully completed conversion to EBT in March. Los Angeles County represents nearly 40 percent of the state's total caseload. The conversion represented the single greatest challenge to the EBT Project and the largest incremental addition to the EBT system. Los Angeles County was converted in three increments:

- ◆ A pilot consisting of two district offices began full implementation on August 1, 2003.
- ◆ 14 district offices began full implementation on February 1, 2004.
- ◆ 16 district offices began full implementation on March 1, 2004.

The Los Angeles conversion was a resounding success due to the planning and hard work of county staff, along with the support of JPMorgan EFS and other project stakeholders and state department staff.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

In the last three months, Alpine, Los Angeles, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Yuba counties began issuing benefits through EBT. Implementation Team members from all over the state assisted in these go-live efforts, and we are extremely pleased with the smooth transition. With the successful implementation of Los Angeles County, and now in the "home stretch," this has been one of the most exciting times for the Implementation Team.

The Implementation Team has fully engaged the remaining eleven counties and statewide EBT operation is now scheduled for July 2004. Discussions with San Bernardino and San Diego counties have begun, and these counties will be migrated to the statewide EBT system in Spring 2005. We are continually impressed with the time, effort, and dedication to the success of EBT the counties have shown.

As the Implementation Team begins the countdown to the final county implementations, we would like to express our thanks for the enthusiastic support and efforts of the EBT teams in every county.

